

Frequently Asked Questions

State Records Center (SRC) Fee Structure

- 1. Why is storage at the State Records Center (SRC) no longer free?** Storage at the SRC has *never* been free, but previously the entire cost of records storage for all state agencies was borne by one agency, the Office of the Secretary of State. Under new budget guidelines adopted by the Governor and General Assembly, the costs of storage will now be borne by each state agency. This policy is more equitable than the previous policy, and it allows each agency to more accurately assess the budgetary impact of record storage.
- 2. Why is the SRC charging an additional fee for services beyond the \$2.70 per box fee?** The \$2.70 per box charge is the amount of money required by the SRC to provide basic storage only—i.e., to pay the rent and utilities and provide a modest amount of staff hours to move boxes from the loading dock to the shelves, etc. This is the base figure approved by OPB.
- 3. What will the cost of additional services be?** The attached sheet details the price of services for Fiscal Year 2006. These prices are significantly lower than those charged by Atlanta-area commercial storage vendors.
- 4. Can I just destroy my records rather than paying for storage?** State law stipulates that the “destruction of records shall occur only through the operation of an approved retention schedule” (O.C.G.A. 50-18-102. See also O.C.G.A. 50-18-94). Agencies may *not* destroy records before the end of their retention period.
- 5. I have some extra space in the basement of my building. Can I just store my records there?** All state agencies are required by law to *manage* their records, even if the records are stored in-house (O.C.G.A. 50-18-94). Storing records in closets and basements may not meet the law’s definition of “management.” And while storing records in closets and basements may appear to be cost-effective, that is rarely the case. No agency would attempt to save money by refusing to buy file cabinets and file folders and stacking the paper in the corner instead. The cost of lost efficiency and control would soon outweigh any benefit from money saved. In the same way, most agencies will find storage at the SRC to be an investment in efficiency and security that is worthwhile and cost-effective.
- 6. Can I store my records with a commercial storage vendor?** Commercial storage vendors often *appear* to be inexpensive, but they are rarely a cost-effective alternative. Commercial vendors in the Atlanta area may offer storage rates as low as \$1.50 per box per year, but the actual cost will be far higher for most state agencies. Commercial vendors charge as much as \$2.25 or more to retrieve one folder for delivery—and *another* \$2.25 to return it to the box. A delivery normally costs between \$10 and \$15 dollars. Most vendors impose a “minimum charge per order”. So, for instance, if the

minimum charge per order is \$25 and the agency needs only one file delivered, the agency will pay \$25 for that single delivery. In addition, most commercial vendors charge large fees (normally \$25 per box) to permanently remove boxes from storage.

In 2003, the SRC conducted a study for one state agency which took into account all of their transactions for that year and calculated the cost of storing their records with a commercial vendor. The annual per box fee—which the vendor represented as being \$1.68 per box—proved to be \$9.90 per box once all the deliveries and interfiles were taken into account. The prices offered by the SRC are far lower than those offered by commercial vendors.

7. I don't call for my records very often, so I only want to pay for storage. Wouldn't it be cheaper to store them with a private company? There are at least two other factors an agency should consider before moving records to private storage:

(1) Many state agency records contain confidential or privileged information, such as Social Security numbers, medical information, and even criminal information. The staff at the SRC are state employees who bring to their work the same responsibility and ethic as the people who created the records. Placing state records in private storage *may* increase the risk of security breaches, such as identity theft.

(2) Commercial vendors have no incentive to assist state agencies with records destruction. In fact, most private companies discourage destruction since it cuts into their bottom line. Records which are not destroyed—but could have been—increase the agency's costs, but they are also subject to discovery during legal proceedings and may increase the agency's legal liability. The SRC alerts agencies when it is time to destroy records and thereby reduces their costs and liability.

State agencies that wish to contract for private storage should first get a written proposal from the vendor which details the actual costs (taking into account all transactions, deliveries, interfiling, and destructions) and spells out the security measures that will be taken to protect the records. The SRC is committed to helping state agencies find the most cost-effective records services possible—whether at the SRC or elsewhere—so staff will be happy to review vendor proposals before they are signed by state agencies.

8. How will billing be done? The SRC will bill on a quarter-forward basis. The invoices for First Quarter (July/August/September) will be issued in June. The Second Quarter (October/November/December) invoices, issued in September, will be adjusted to account for any transactions or changes in storage during the First Quarter.

9. How can I reduce my storage costs? *Managing* your records is the best way to reduce storage costs. Specifically, (1) Weed files before transferring them to the SRC and only transfer records which must be kept according to the State Retention Schedules. (2) Keep an accurate record of what is in your boxes at the SRC. Fully 25% of all files requested from the SRC are not in the box at the time of the request because they were never there in the first place or they have been previously delivered to the agency. An

agency can avoid paying for unsuccessful searches by knowing what is in each box and requesting the proper file the first time. (3) Whenever appropriate, scan records or produce them electronically from the start. Avoid creating paper. (For guidance on when electronic records are appropriate, see the archives website at www.GeorgiaArchives.org). (4) Make certain your agency has a formally-appointed Records Management Officer (as required by O.C.G.A. 50-18-94(7)) and that your RMO has been trained by the State Archives staff.

10. Can I send my own staff to pull my records? Yes. Each employee assigned to pull records at the SRC must be authorized by the agency head to do so (on a form available from the SRC) and must complete training (normally one hour or less). Training, and any subsequent assistance provided to agency personnel, will be billed at the SRC hourly labor rate (\$30/hour in FY06).

11. How can I get more information? To review your records at the SRC or to discuss your agency's transactions, please contact the Manager of the Center, Robert Williams, at 404-756-4860 or rwilliams@sos.state.ga.us. To discuss how to more effectively manage your records or to arrange training for your agency RMO, please contact the Assistant Director for Records and Information Management, Andrew Taylor, at 678-364-3791 or astaylor@sos.state.ga.us. If you have further questions, please contact the Director of the Archives Division, David Carmicheal, at 678-364-3714 or dcarmicheal@sos.state.ga.us.